

1971 Daimler Sovereign – A Covid-19 garage find

I first discovered the car in September 2020 during the Covid 19 global pandemic when various national lockdowns and restrictions were in place. I was attending Amanda's other car for an unrelated issue I noticed the car covered in 27 years of dust. The bonnet was open and the 4.2 litre engine was visible minus some parts.



The car was all intact apart from the battery, the washer bottle and bracket had all been removed. I looked under the vehicle, which was inside a dry garage, with all the tyres original Dunlop radial tyres which had seen better days, all under inflated

I asked Amanda who had been working on the vehicle. She told me numerous people had tried to get the vehicle running over the years including a local painter/decorator but to no avail. She told me her Dad had parked the car in the garage in 1993 and a week later he died. She said it ran when it was parked up there all those years ago. At the rear of the vehicle there were numerous parts and boxes and a brand new NOS driver's door. The underside of the vehicle was intact and undisturbed. The headlining was all mouldy and falling off and there was no life in the vehicle due to no power. There was no way of telling whether the engine or gearbox worked after all this time.

Amanda told me she wanted to pull the old garage down and wanted the vehicle out of the way as it had been sat there years and wanted to know if anyone wanted it?

I told her I might know a few people who would be interested in the vehicle. I left Amanda and she gave me her details, I spoke to my boss who likes old cars and said we should go back and rescue the vehicle but there was nowhere to store it.

A couple of months went by and I had decided not to pursue it. It was the run up to my 50th birthday and I was having a drink at a close friend's house. All restaurants were closed due to the pandemic and I had cancelled all my earlier plans to travel to Monaco for the Grand prix earlier in the year. I told my friend about the car and showed him the photos. One thing led to another and by the end of the night we struck a deal. He said if I could get the car he would fund the repairs and I would do the restoration work.

A couple of weeks later I contacted Amanda who told me since I had last seen her mother had sadly passed away. She told me she would sell me the Daimler but would have to speak to the rest of the family about selling the vehicle as it was part of the estate. I made an offer that was initially refused so I decided not to pursue it. After about an hour my friend suggested I contact her again to make another

considered offer, as I was still talking about the car. Amanda accepted this offer and we struck a deal. Amanda wanted the vehicle removing quickly so we arranged to pick up the vehicle a few days later.

Amanda dug out all the old paperwork and had had to smash the old padlock off the garage door and force the door open so the car could see the light of day again. We discovered the vehicle had no brakes but the handbrake did work. It took me an hour to free everything up and get the vehicle moving again. We got the car out down a steep inclined driveway which was quite precarious on to the road.

Amanda was quite emotional but I assured her we could bring the vehicle back to its former glory and we would let her know the progress of what happens. I told her I had had success with my own 1965 VW Beetle in the past and she was pleased with this.

On 14th November I set about recovering the vehicle to my friend's driveway to see what can of worms I had opened. I remember my friend remarking in a sort of Donald Trump style quote: "We've done a great thing here today!!!"

A couple of hours later we looked over the car and sourced a new battery and fitted it to the vehicle. I was pleasantly surprised when I fitted the battery the vehicle started coming back to life. After more than thirty years of working in the motor trade I was aware that old British Leyland cars like Jaguar's and Daimler's were notorious for electrical faults.

To my surprise the only things that were not working were the horn and the heated rear window. Everything else worked: lights, wipers, gauges, interior lights. My friend inadvertently turned the key and to our surprise we saw the engine actually turn on the starter motor. I decided that we should change the fluids and give the vehicle a separate fuel supply as the fuel coming from the drain holes on the fuel tanks were like black treacle.

The next day I set about changing the fluids and then I cleaned out the twin carburettor float chambers. I then rigged up a separate fuel tank and about 2 and a half hours later the vehicle started and sprang in to life after more than twenty seven years! I then discovered that the gearbox worked, but the vehicle had no brakes and the suspension bushes were all in a bad state. This was a huge breakthrough and after a few discussions it was decided to tackle the fuel system so that the vehicle would run under its own steam.

I set about removing the fuel tanks, fuel lines and pumps. I made a simplified wiring diagram and followed this for diagnosis. We sourced two new fuel tanks, and we had decided the pumps and filter were beyond service. Once the parts were fitted the vehicle would now start and run under its own steam on the key. New fuel gauge senders were fitted and the tank switchover system all worked perfectly.

The next thing we tackled was the braking system and after a couple of repairs we got the braking system working in a rudimentary way. On 2nd December 2020 we had another breakthrough: the car would now start, drive and stop under its own steam, so we took the vehicle for a little drive on the road and everything functioned ok.

We had discussions with a few classic car auctioneers. My initial thoughts were to get it running and move the vehicle on to someone who could do a full restoration. It was later decided we would get the vehicle repaired and painted as it only had minor corrosion to all four wings.

After a problem occurred with the charging system an uprated alternator was sourced and fitted and we got the vehicle taxed and insured and ready for its journey to the body shop. The vehicle had a few knocks from the suspension and the exhaust was not in great shape but it was decided to get the body and small interior repairs to the seats carried



out. Early 2021 the vehicle was moved to 'Spraycraft' in Widnes - a small local classic car body shop. Whilst the vehicle was away I sourced an NOS exhaust and suspension parts.

We supplied the body shop with the driver's door but were later told the original owner had sourced a series 2 XJ6 Jaguar door which looked the same but was slightly different. The body shop set about getting the door to fit before the vehicle was painted and the chrome was shipped off to Coventry to be re-chromed. My friend Ross financed the repairs and helped with the resurrection of the Daimler to this point and although our friendship was tested at times, I knew we would prevail.

While the car was away being repaired I started to look through the paperwork and discovered the previous owner was an author. My friend's wife did some digging and we discovered the car was owned by Alan Durband; a prolific local author and co-founder of the Everyman theatre in Liverpool and a former pupil and later teacher at the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys, where between 1958 -1960 he was the highly regarded Sixth Form teacher of A level English to Paul McCartney.

We got the vehicle back which was stored at another friend's workshop where I could carry out final repairs to the suspension and exhaust system and finish off all the repairs to make the vehicle roadworthy and useable. The wheels were painted and new tyres were sourced so that the car would float along smoothly when driven like Jaguar had originally intended. At the time the car was released it was hailed as the most luxurious saloon car in the world. We wanted to recreate the original feel of the vehicle.

There was another hiccup with the brakes as the fluid started leaking in to the manifold system. It was found the six pot callipers and brake master cylinder needed either replacing or overhauling so, after pricing up a master cylinder costing more than £600 I decided to go back to old school techniques and sourced a repair kit for £35. This did the trick and now the Daimler had proper stopping power.

With all the repairs carried out I decided to get in touch with Amanda (Alan Durband's daughter) and my friend and I decided to surprise her and take the car to see her in April 2021. We hid the car around the corner and at first she did not remember who we were. She then realised and asked: "am I going to get emotional?" We revealed the car to Amanda and took her for a drive. She said the last time she had driven with her dad in the car was when she was eleven years old and all the memories came flooding back. She asked if we could show the car to her friends as they would not believe the quick turnaround of the vehicle restoration so we agreed to take her and she remarked how the vehicle still ran very smooth.

I asked her about her Dad and said she had not mentioned he was famous at our initial meeting. I told her we had been in touch with a magazine who wanted to do a feature on the Daimler and its unique Liverpool history of The Beatles and Sir Paul McCartney and the story of finding such a great vehicle during the Covid 19 pandemic.

My friend and I have recently contacted a local classic car specialist and will be featured in their worldwide auction.

I am personally thankful to my friend to have the vision to see the project through and for all the help from my family and friends to see this project have a happy ending and to see such a beautiful classic car live and breathe once again.

Glenn Maiker

